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SUBJECT: (C) IDASA'S MASAMVU SAYS SOUTH AFRICA PUSHING
MUGABE TO RETIRE IN 2008

REF: A. HARARE 1307

[1](#)B. HARARE 1294

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission Donald Teitelbaum. Reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: South Africa wants Zimbabwean President Mugabe to announce at the upcoming ZANU-PF congress that he will retire in 2008, according to IDASA analyst Sydney Masamvu. Masamvu says that former President Mandela met privately with Mugabe October 23 to encourage him to retire. Senior ANC officials are traveling to Zimbabwe to reiterate the message. President Mbeki is also using SADC economic integration to highlight Zimbabwe's failing economy and encourage reform. The use of Mandela, ANC channels, and SADC is potentially more effective than South Africa's previous initiatives. Masamvu says that the political jockeying within ZANU-PF is intensifying, but Mugabe has yet to show his hand on his retirement plans or succession. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (C) PolOff met with Sydney Masamvu, analyst with the Institute for Democracy in South Africa (IDASA), on November [1](#)3. Masamvu, a Zimbabwean who worked for International Crisis Group until they closed their South Africa office in September, began work for IDASA's Countries in Transition office on November 1. USAID Zimbabwe and USAID South Africa are co-funding Masamvu's salary at IDASA (NOTE: strictly protect source of Masamvu's salary). He will focus on analyzing developments in Zimbabwe and Swaziland, publishing reports on both countries, and engaging journalists. Post has worked with Masamvu for two years and been consistently impressed by his insights and analysis.

South Africa Wants Mugabe to Retire in 2008

[1](#)3. (C) According to Masamvu, South Africa is strongly encouraging Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe to stick to the current Constitution and retire in 2008. (NOTE: Media reports have suggested that Mugabe might amend the Zimbabwean Constitution to synchronize the presidential and parliamentary elections in 2010, thus extending his term by two years. END NOTE.) ANC Secretary-General Kgalema Motlanthe told Masamvu that former South African President Nelson Mandela met privately with Mugabe October 23 on the margins of the SADC Extraordinary Summit on Economic

Integration to encourage Mugabe to join him in retirement.

¶4. (C) Masamvu also has learned that SAG Defense Minister and ANC National Chairperson Mosiuoa Lekota plans to travel to Zimbabwe the week of November 6 to reiterate the message about Mugabe's retirement to his Ministry of Defense counterpart and the ZANU-PF leadership. Lekota and Motlanthe will also attend the ZANU-PF conference December 2-5, where they hope Mugabe will announce his retirement in 2008. Masamvu believes that South Africa's first choice as next Zimbabwean president is Simba Makoni, but they would settle for "anyone but Mugabe" at this point.

SADC Economic Integration as Leverage to Encourage Reform

¶5. (C) Masamvu and IDASA Deputy Director Ivor Jenkins suggested that South Africa is using SADC economic integration to leverage reform in Zimbabwe. Jenkins told PolOff October 25 that Zimbabwe stands out as the one country in SADC with negative economic growth, which is dragging down the region and slowing economic integration. This gives Mbeki an argument to push for economic reform in Zimbabwe. While acknowledging that South Africa is encouraging SADC economic integration for multiple reasons, including its own commercial interests, Jenkins believes that the recent flurry of activity on integration, including hosting the October 23 "Extraordinary SADC Summit on Regional Integration," is designed in part to highlight Zimbabwe's economic failings and spur reform. The Extraordinary Summit reviewed the findings of a SADC task force focused on accelerating regional integration and reiterated the highly ambitious (COMMENT: and probably unrealistic) timetable of establishing

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a free trade area by 2008, a customs union by 2010, a common market by 2015, and an economic and monetary union by 2018 (septel).

¶6. (U) Recent press accounts have suggested that regional leaders are pressing Mugabe to reform Zimbabwe's economy. The Sunday Times newspaper reported August 20 that current SADC Chairman and Lesotho PM Pakalitha Mosisili stressed that the situation in Zimbabwe "is of concern to SADC precisely because Zimbabwe was the second-strongest economy in the community and for its economy to have declined to the levels at which (it has) is of major concern to us." Another press report in the September 3 Sunday Independent suggested that SADC offered to help Zimbabwe "sort out" its economy at the Lesotho summit, an offer Mugabe reportedly rejected.

ZANU-PF Maneuvering

¶7. (C) Masamvu, who just returned from a three-week trip to Zimbabwe, reported that the political jockeying within ZANU-PF is intensifying. He said there is tremendous pressure on Mugabe to announce his retirement in 2008 at the ZANU-PF congress. Solomon Mujuru told Masamvu that Zimbabwe can "limp through" to 2008, but no longer. Masamvu sizes up the ZANU-PF succession battle as a three-way struggle:

-- The Mujurus (Vice President Joyce and her husband Solomon) have allied with former Finance Minister Simba Makoni (Ref A). Solomon Mujuru understands the weakness of his wife as a presidential candidate and is floating the idea of reinstituting a strong prime ministerial system with a ceremonial president. If they can push through the President/PM constitutional amendment in 2007 and win the 2008 election, Joyce Mujuru would become president and Simba Makoni PM. (BIO NOTE: Masamvu met with Solomon Mujuru and said he looked "relatively healthy," about the same as the last time he saw him. Mujuru drinks heavily, and "you have to meet with him early in the day" to have a coherent

conversation. END BIO NOTE.)

-- Former Speaker of Parliament Emmerson Mnangagwa continues to jockey for the ZANU-PF leadership and believes he can benefit from Mugabe's increasing distrust of the Mujurus. Several Mnangagwa allies, including former Information Minister Jonathan Moyo, told Masamvu that they have been disappointed by Mnangagwa's lack of political courage and skill, and believe that the Mujurus will outplay him.

-- The third emerging faction is led by Gideon Gono, current Governor of the Reserve Bank. Gono has Mugabe's trust, perhaps more than the Mujurus, and has cleverly built his political base. Masamvu says that Gono, through his control of foreign exchange, has "bought" the support of the "securocrats," the key military and intelligence officials. For the first time, senior military officials are saying that a "capable person" -- even if he or she did not participate in liberation struggle -- should lead the country. This creates a niche for Gono (COMMENT: but also for Makoni).

Talk of MDC "Reunification"

¶8. (C) Leader of the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) splinter faction Arthur Mutambara told Masamvu that he is open to reuniting with the Morgan Tsvangirai-led MDC. The recent drubbing at the rural council elections (Ref B) underscored the importance of the two factions working together. (NOTE: Masamvu largely attributes the MDC's failure in the rural elections to lack of resources. END NOTE.) The two MDC factions have even discussed a potential joint leadership slate, with Tsvangirai at the head, Mutambara and Thokezani Khupe as co-vice presidents, Gibson Sibanda as national chairman, and Tendai Biti as secretary-general. There is pressure to announce the

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reunification before the ZANU-PF congress.

¶9. (C) The problem, Masamvu said, is Welshman Ncube, who is resisting rejoining a Tsvangirai-led MDC. Tsvangirai and

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other MDC leaders told Masamvu that they want to find Ncube "something" to do outside MDC politics, perhaps a visiting professorship at a U.S. university.

Comment

¶10. (C) We agree that South Africa would like to see Mugabe leave office as soon as possible. The use of ANC party leaders -- Lekota and Motlanthe -- working through their ZANU-PF counterparts is potentially more effective than traditional diplomatic channels. While we understand that former President Mandela and President Mugabe are not close, their October 23 conversation represents the SAG bringing out its big guns to encourage Mugabe to retire. The recent push for SADC economic integration could highlight Zimbabwe's economic deterioration, giving South Africa and other regional leaders leverage to encourage reform -- without looking like they are acting for the United Kingdom or United States.

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